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TALKING POINTS
AFGHANISTAN
8 September 1986

Afghanistan: The Insurgency This Summer

In fighting this summer, Afghan insurgents increased their activity in the major cities and in the northern border provinces, easing concerns that the Soviets and their Afghan allies were on the way to establishing clear control in these areas. The Soviets and Afghan regime forces mounted operations both in response to insurgent attacks and to interdict insurgent logistics. Their effort against resistance logistics has made supply movement much more difficult and expensive for the insurgents. We still do not believe that either side has "turned the corner".

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In the cities:

--Kabul. The frequency and intensity of rocket attacks and explosions in the capital area increased sharply in July. Insurgent rockets destroyed an estimated 300 metric tons of ammunition at a storage area north of Kabul. An Afghan regime surface-to-air missile support facility suffered heavy damage and casualties, as the result of a rocket attack in late August.

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--Herat. The insurgents frequently battled Afghan regime and Soviet forces in Afghanistan's second largest city this summer. The Soviet and Afghan regime have made repeated, but unsuccessful, attempts to clear the city of guerrilla forces and have razed wide swaths around the old quarter, an insurgent stronghold.

--Qandahar. In the third largest city, the insurgents have maintained a high level of activity, although security rings around Qandahar have created increased problems for the guerrillas. Soviet and regime forces have failed to extend the area they control much beyond the airport and the road into town during this summer's numerous battles

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Increased guerrilla activity in the northern provinces apparently sparked a month-long multiregimental offensive by Soviet and Afghan regime forces in Badakhshan and Takhar Provinces in early summer. Panjsher Valley commander Masood has been organizing resistance groups and working to raise the overall level of fighting in the area.

--Guerrilla groups under Masood's command recently overran a government base in Takhar province, capturing over 200 government troops,

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In the summer's major counterinsurgent operations, Soviet forces took the lead in the efforts to secure key lines of communication and reduce the insurgent threat in the cities. The Afghan armed forces--under-manned, demoralized, faction-ridden, and ill-equipped--remain unable to undertake large-scale operations on their own. Although the multiregimental Soviet operations this summer had limited returns, the Soviets are likely to continue mounting such sweeps periodically in conjunction with more use of airpower and actions by special purpose forces against insurgent targets. (S NF)

Resistance fighters are concerned about the effects of counterinsurgent measures on their capabilities for continued heavy fighting this fall.

--Supply lines from Pakistan remain under pressure, causing rerouting of some shipments and driving up costs of transporting materiel.

--Retaliatory policies in border provinces by the Soviets and regime forces--that have driven out civilian supporters of the resistance--are adding to the insurgents' logistic burden.

--The expansion of security zones and outposts around major urban areas and the growth of militia forces are posing a greater threat to the guerrillas' freedom of movement. [REDACTED]

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MILITARY ACTIVITY IN KABUL Jan-Aug 1986

